



US012066655B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Campbell et al.

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 12,066,655 B2**

(45) **Date of Patent:** **Aug. 20, 2024**

(54) **TERMINATED HOLLOW-CORE FIBER WITH ENDCAP**

(71) Applicant: **Optoskand AB**, Mölndal (SE)

(72) Inventors: **Stuart Campbell**, Lindome (SE);
Rasmus Kihlberg, Gothenburg (SE);
Mats Blomqvist, Sävedalen (SE)

(73) Assignee: **Optoskand AB**, Mölndal (SE)

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 100 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **17/551,117**

(22) Filed: **Dec. 14, 2021**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2023/0185019 A1 Jun. 15, 2023

(51) **Int. Cl.**
G02B 6/02 (2006.01)
G02B 6/255 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC **G02B 6/02328** (2013.01); **G02B 6/255** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
CPC G02B 6/02328; G02B 6/255
USPC 385/125
See application file for complete search history.

(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

7,379,648 B1 5/2008 Brooks et al.
11,002,919 B2 5/2021 Alkeskjold et al.
2004/0071423 A1* 4/2004 Libori G02B 6/02328
385/127

2012/0307251 A1* 12/2012 Sanders G01C 19/727
356/460
2013/0070252 A1* 3/2013 Feth G01C 19/727
385/50
2019/0113679 A1* 4/2019 Schwarz G02B 6/4206
2020/0310039 A1 10/2020 Alkeskjold et al.
2021/0124112 A1 4/2021 Uebel et al.
2021/0396931 A1* 12/2021 Harker G02B 6/255
2023/0036091 A1* 2/2023 Lugo H01S 3/06704

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

International Search Report and Written Opinion received for International Patent Application No. PCT/EP2022/081840 mailed on Feb. 15, 2023, 15 pages.

* cited by examiner

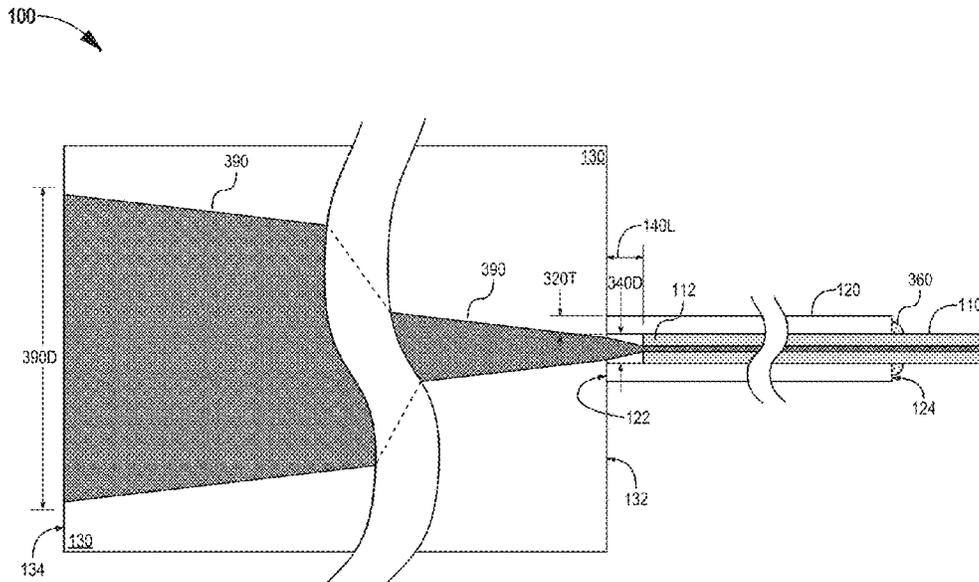
Primary Examiner — Jerry M Blevins

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Morrison & Foerster LLP

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A terminated hollow-core optical fiber includes a capillary, a hollow-core optical fiber including a structured cladding, and an endcap. A first end of the hollow-core optical fiber terminates inside the capillary a non-zero distance away from a first end face of the capillary. The hollow-core optical fiber is adhered to the capillary at a second end face of the capillary where the hollow-core optical fiber extends out of the capillary. The endcap is fused to the first end face of the capillary. The endcap has a larger diameter than the first end of the hollow-core optical fiber. This termination scheme does not require fusing the hollow-core fiber itself to the endcap or any other part. Therefore, this termination scheme is applicable to hollow-core fibers with a structured cladding that cannot tolerate the temperatures associated with fusing the hollow-core fiber to another part.

12 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets



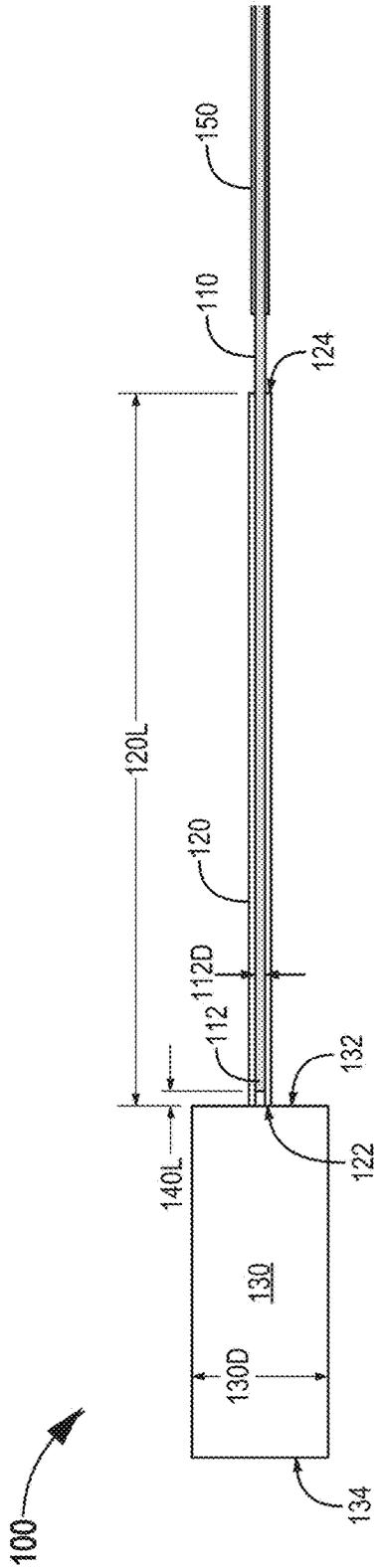


FIG. 1

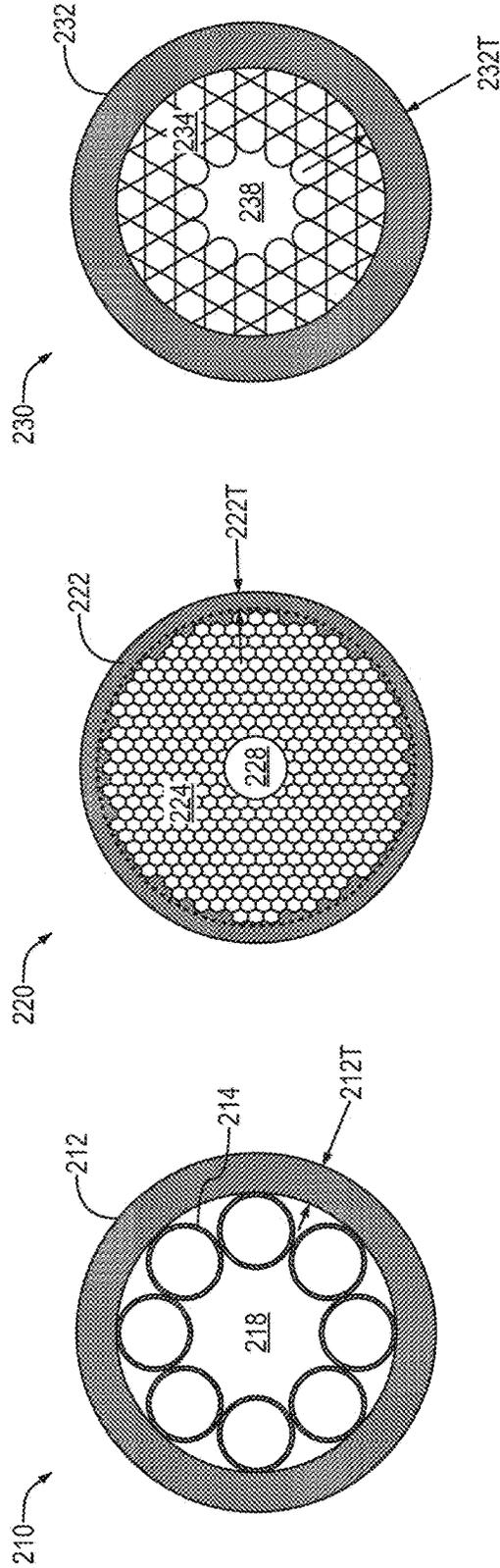


FIG. 2

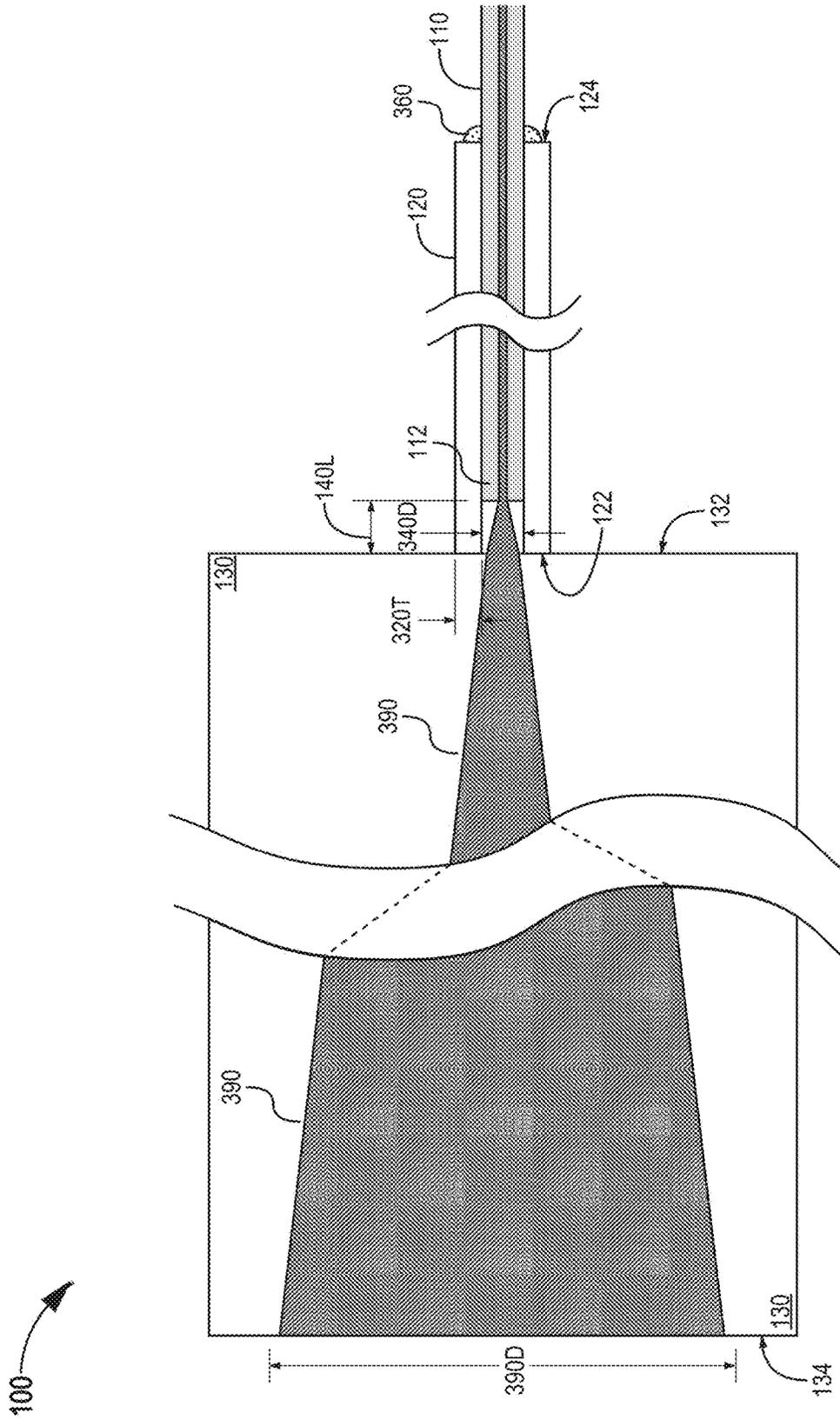


FIG. 3

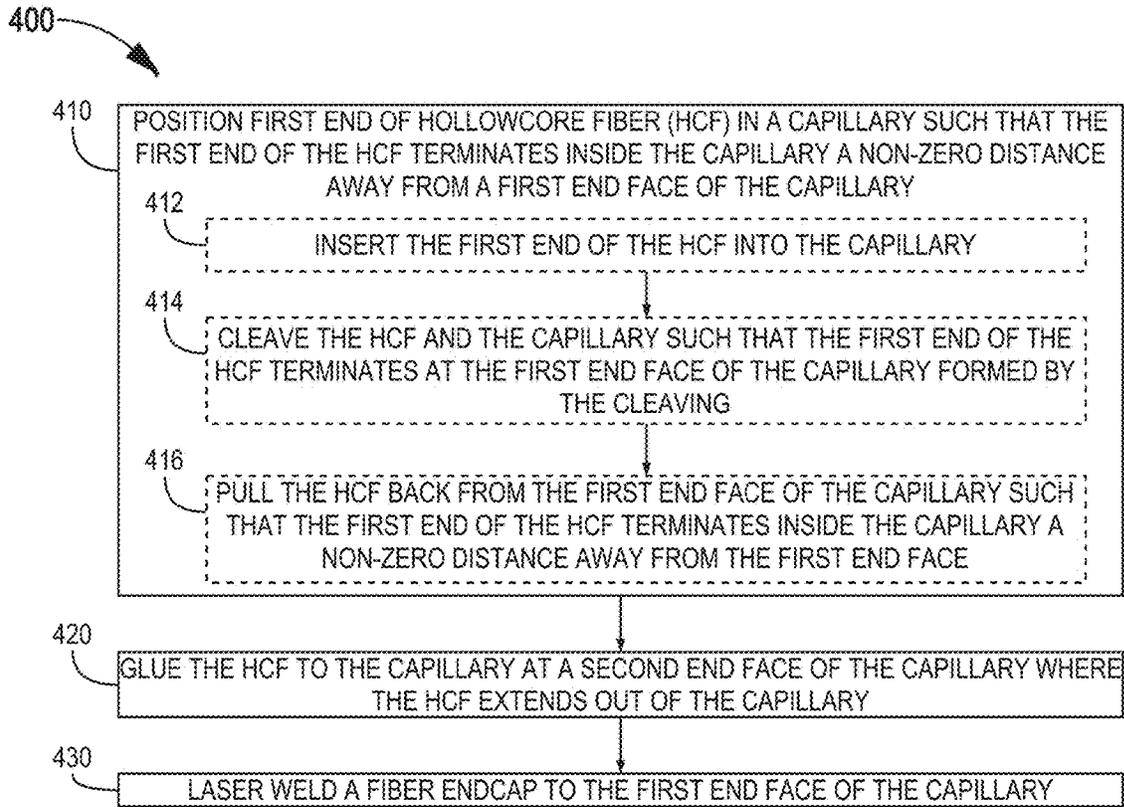
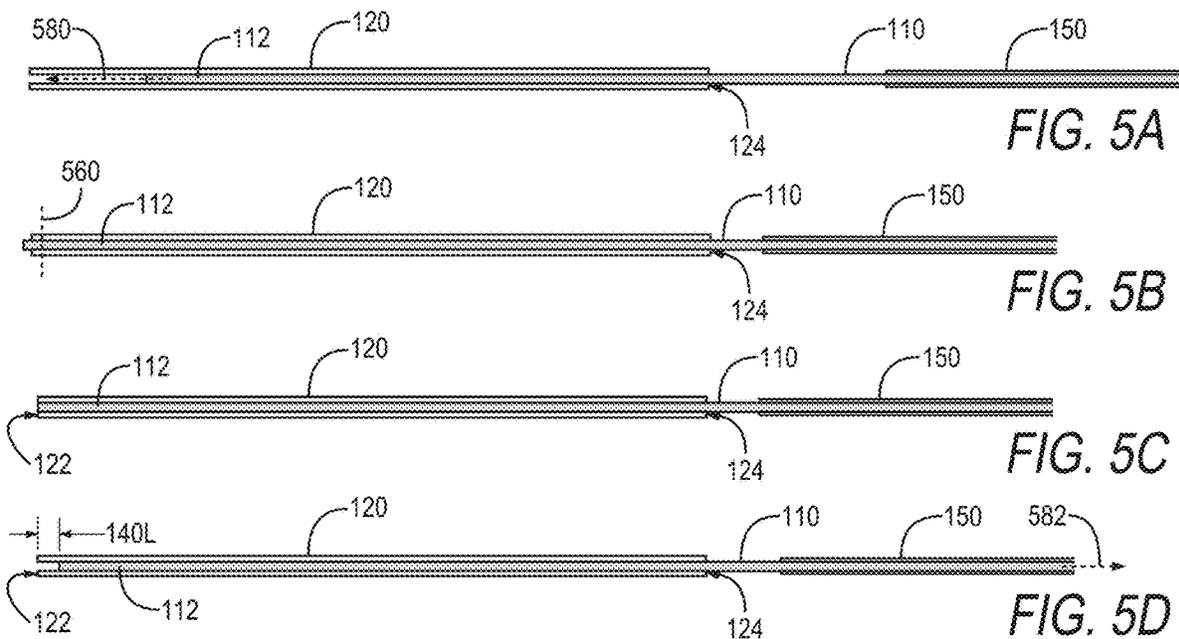


FIG. 4



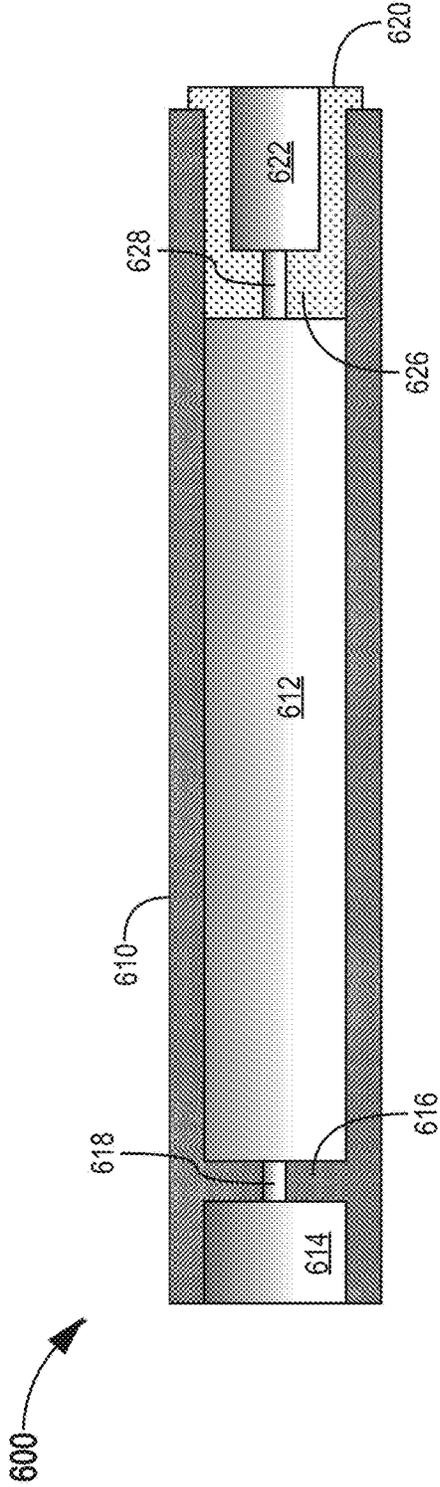


FIG. 6

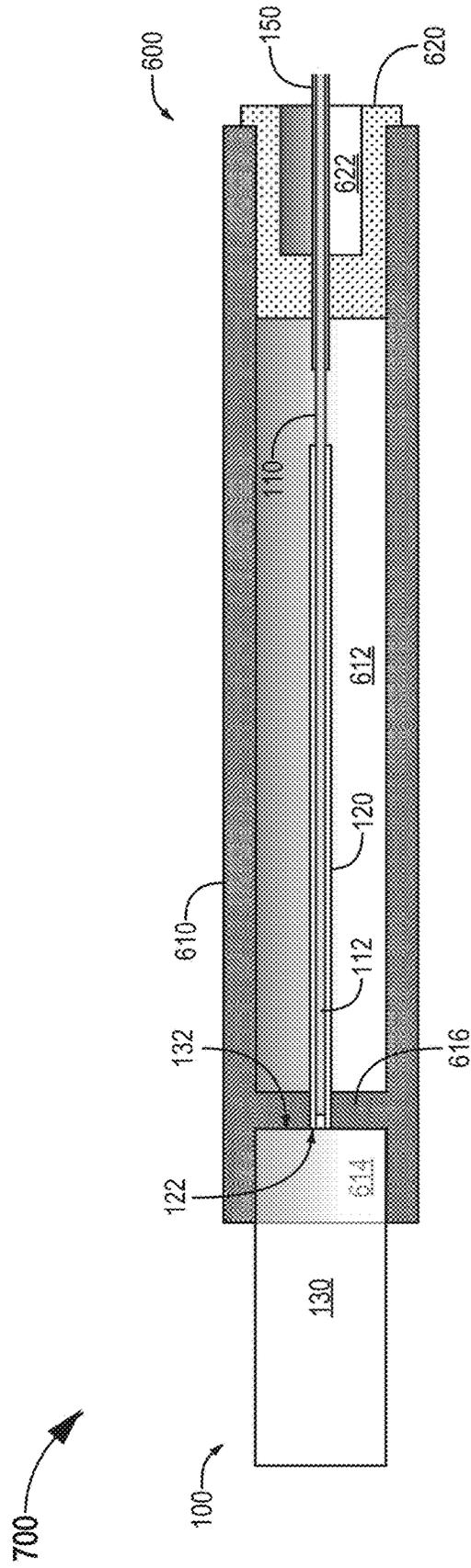
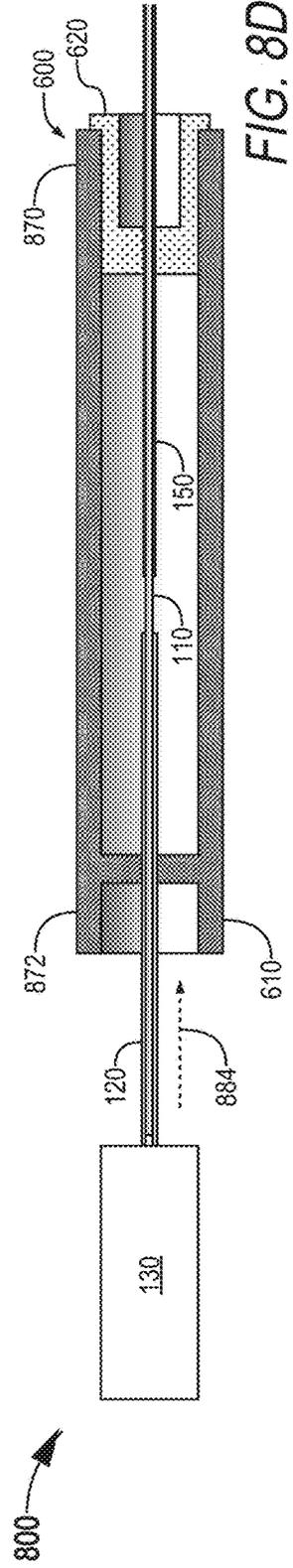
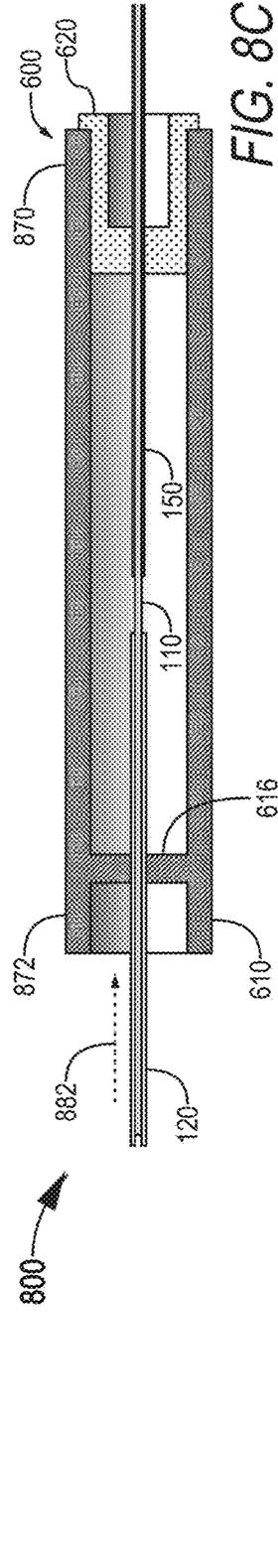
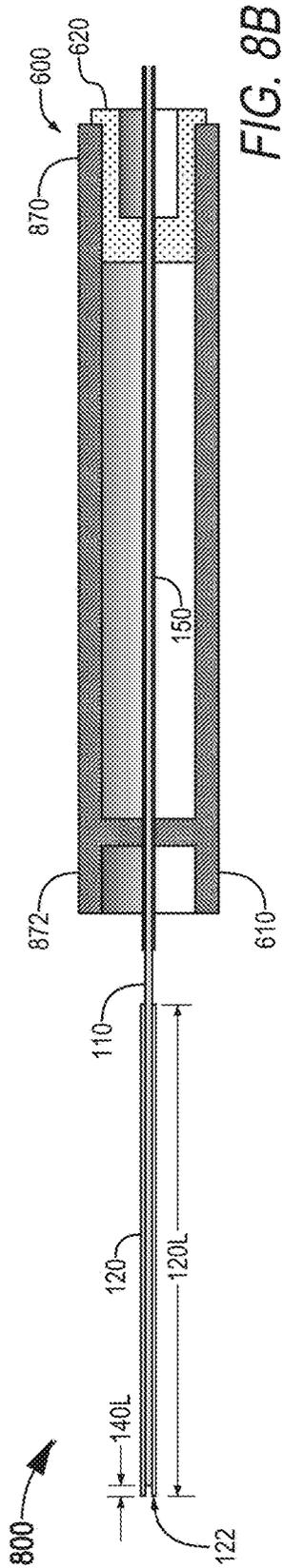
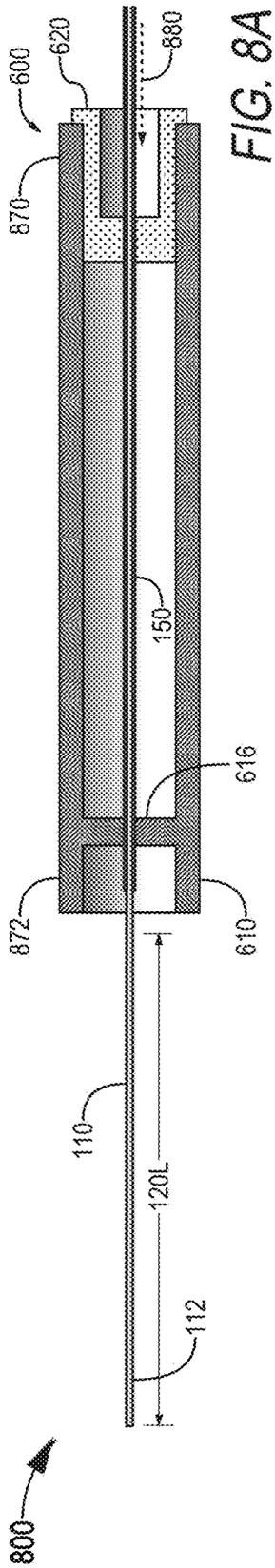


FIG. 7



TERMINATED HOLLOW-CORE FIBER WITH ENDCAP

TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to the termination of optical fibers. The present invention relates in particular to termination of hollow-core optical fibers with endcaps for transmission of high optical power.

DISCUSSION OF BACKGROUND ART

An optical fiber is made of an optically transmissive material, usually a glass, that guides light from one end of the fiber to the other. A traditional optical fiber has a solid core with a higher refractive index than a surrounding cladding material. Total internal reflection at the interface between the core and the cladding material causes light to be guided in the core.

Optical fibers confine the guided light to a small cross-sectional area. The light-guiding core in many optical single-mode fibers has a diameter of ten micrometers (μm) or less. Thus, when an optical fiber is used to transmit high-power laser light, the laser light intensity in the core can be quite high. This can render the optical fiber susceptible to light-induced damage, especially at the ends of the optical fiber where surface contaminants can act as light absorbers that thermally damage the end of the optical fiber. Such damage is often prevented by protective termination of the optical fiber, wherein the end of the optical fiber is fused to a so-called fiber "endcap". The endcap is a solid piece of glass with a much larger diameter than the core of the optical fiber.

Laser light emerging from an optical fiber is highly divergent due to diffraction and the small diameter of the core thereof. Unlike the core, the endcap does not confine the laser beam to a small cross-sectional area. The diameter of the laser beam at the distal surface of the endcap facing away from the optical fiber is therefore usually at least an order of magnitude greater than at the end of the optical fiber itself. The issue of potential interaction between laser light and surface contaminants is displaced to the distal endcap surface where the laser light intensity is smaller and, consequently, light absorption by surface contaminants on the distal surface of the endcap is unlikely to damage the endcap. Additionally, due to the larger diameter of the laser beam at the distal surface of the endcap, distortion of the mode properties of the laser beam by surface contaminants is usually reduced.

Traditional optical fibers with solid cores have certain limitations. Inevitably, the solid core material absorbs and/or scatters some of the light propagating in the optical fiber, resulting in a loss that limits the distance over which a signal can be transmitted. In telecommunication, where light signals are transmitted over long distances, this loss must be compensated for with optical amplifiers. The light-induced damage threshold of the solid core material also imposes an upper limit on the optical power transmittable by the optical fiber. Therefore, traditional optical fibers with solid cores are generally less suitable for transmission of laser light above a certain power. In applications with spectrally broad laser beams, chromatic dispersion in the core temporally broadens the laser beam. In applications with high-peak-power laser pulses, nonlinear processes can cause optical loss or damage the optical fiber.

A hollow-core optical fiber, on the other hand, guides light in a hollow core rather than a solid core. The light propagates in air, in an optically-inert gas, or in a vacuum. Hollow

core fibers therefore have significantly reduced absorption/scattering losses, chromatic dispersion, and optical nonlinearities compared to traditional solid-core fibers. Hollow-core fibers are also capable of transmitting high-power laser light that exceeds the light-induced damage threshold of solid fiber cores. The notion of a hollow-core fiber was conceived of more than fifty years ago as a low-loss alternative to traditional solid-core optical fibers. The first practical implementations were, however, not realized until the 1990s. These first hollow-core fibers relied on the photonic bandgap effect to guide light in a hollow core surrounded by a microstructured photonic-bandgap cladding having many smaller hollow channels arranged in a honeycomb-like pattern.

More recently, simpler designs have been developed with the light-guiding based on antiresonance, that is, destructive optical interference of the component of the light that would otherwise propagate radially away from the optical axis defined by the center of the core. Examples of such simpler designs include Kagome fibers, revolver fibers, and nested-antiresonant-nodeless (NANF) fibers. In each of these designs, a hollow core is surrounded by a structured cladding. The relatively thin-walled structured cladding is supported by a thicker, cylindrical outer wall. The structured cladding has several hollow channels spanning the length of the optical fiber. The radial component of light undergoes partial reflections at the surfaces of the walls of the structured cladding, and these walls are configured such that the partial reflections interfere constructively in a manner similar to a Fabry-Perot interferometer. As a result, the structured cladding guides light at the design wavelength to propagate longitudinally along the hollow core instead of transversely outward through the cladding. The revolver fiber is particularly simple. Its cross-sectional shape consists of (a) a larger hollow ring and (b) a set of smaller hollow rings, typically six or eight, arranged along the interior wall of the larger ring and surrounding a void at the center of the larger ring.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The performance and ease-of-use of hollow-core fibers would benefit from termination with an endcap. Contamination and damage of the ends of a hollow-core fiber presents issues similar to those afflicting traditional solid-core optical fibers. Additionally, if the hollow-core fiber-end is unprotected, moisture from the ambient environment tends to diffuse into the channels of the structured cladding, degrading the light-guiding properties of this structure and even degrading the structure itself.

We have realized that the conventional process of splicing an endcap to the end of an optical fiber is unsuitable for many hollow-core fibers having a structured cladding. Splicing is commonly done by thermally fusing the interface between the optical fiber and the endcap. If the interface between the endcap and a hollow-core fiber with a structured cladding is heated uniformly, the heat required to fuse the hollow-core fiber to the endcap tends to melt the thin walls of the structured cladding.

Disclosed herein is a hollow-core-fiber termination solution that connects an endcap to a hollow-core fiber with no need for fusing the hollow-core fiber itself to any other part. This termination therefore extends the benefits of an endcap to hollow-core fibers having a structured cladding.

In the present approach, an endcap is connected to a hollow-core fiber only indirectly such that the structured cladding of the hollow-core fiber is not exposed to excessive heat. The hollow-core fiber is inserted into a capillary, with

3

the end of the optical fiber terminating inside the capillary a short distance before an end face of the capillary. The endcap is fused to this end face of the capillary. During the fusing process, the capillary holds the hollow-core fiber, while providing the thermal isolation required to prevent excessive heating of the structured cladding of the hollow-core fiber. To secure the hollow-core fiber in the capillary, the hollow-core fiber is adhered to the opposite end of the capillary where the hollow-core fiber extends out of the capillary in the direction away from the endcap. This adhesive bond may cooperate with the fused bond between the capillary and the endcap to seal off the end of the hollow core fiber from the outside environment.

In one aspect, a terminated hollow-core optical fiber includes a capillary, a hollow-core optical fiber having a structured cladding, and an endcap. The hollow-core optical fiber has a first end that terminates inside the capillary a non-zero distance away from a first end face of the capillary. The hollow-core optical fiber is adhered to the capillary at a second end face of the capillary where the hollow-core optical fiber extends out of the capillary. The endcap is fused to the first end face of the capillary. The endcap has a larger diameter than the first end of the hollow-core optical fiber.

In another aspect, a method for terminating a hollow-core optical fiber includes a step of positioning a first end of a hollow-core optical fiber, having a structured cladding, in a capillary such that the first end of the hollow-core optical fiber terminates inside the capillary a non-zero distance away from a first end face of the capillary. The method also includes, after the positioning step, a step of adhering the hollow-core optical fiber to the capillary at a second end face of the capillary where the hollow-core optical fiber extends out of the capillary. In addition, the method includes a step of laser welding an endcap to the first end face of the capillary. The endcap has a larger diameter than the first end of the hollow-core optical fiber.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of the specification, schematically illustrate preferred embodiments of the present invention, and together with the general description given above and the detailed description of the preferred embodiments given below, serve to explain principles of the present invention.

FIG. 1 illustrates a hollow-core fiber terminated with an endcap via a capillary and with no need for fusing the hollow-core fiber to either one of the endcap and the capillary, according to an embodiment.

FIG. 2 illustrates examples of hollow-core fibers that may be terminated according to the scheme of FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 shows the terminated hollow-core fiber of FIG. 1 in further detail and also illustrates light propagation there-through.

FIG. 4 is a flowchart for a method for terminating a hollow-core fiber with an endcap, with no need for fusing the hollow-core fiber to another part, according to an embodiment.

FIGS. 5A-D illustrate a method for positioning a hollow-core fiber in a capillary, according to an embodiment.

FIG. 6 illustrates a housing for the terminated hollow-core fiber of FIG. 1, according to an embodiment.

FIG. 7 illustrates a connectorized hollow-core fiber that includes the terminated hollow-core fiber of FIG. 1 and the housing of FIG. 6, according to an embodiment.

4

FIGS. 8A-D illustrate certain steps of a method for assembling the connectorized hollow-core fiber of FIG. 7, according to an embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring now to the drawings, wherein like components are designated by like numerals, FIG. 1 illustrates one terminated hollow-core fiber 100. Terminated hollow-core fiber 100 includes a hollow-core fiber 110, a capillary 120, and an endcap 130. Hollow-core fiber 110 is connected to endcap 130 via capillary 120 and with no need for fusing hollow-core fiber 110 to either one of endcap 130 and capillary 120. Capillary 120 and endcap 130 may be made of glass.

An end 112 of hollow-core fiber 110 is positioned inside capillary 120. Fiber end 112 terminates inside capillary 120, a non-zero distance 140L away from an end face 122 of capillary 120. End face 122 and endcap 130 are fused together, for example by laser welding. By virtue of non-zero distance 140L, endcap 130 is not fused directly to hollow-core fiber 110. Capillary 120 facilitates termination of hollow-core fiber 110 with endcap 130 without exposing fiber end 112 to potentially damaging levels of heat.

FIG. 2 illustrates examples of hollow-core fibers 110 that may be terminated according to the scheme of terminated hollow-core fiber 100: a revolver fiber 210, a photonic crystal fiber 220, and a Kagome fiber 230. FIG. 2 shows a cross-sectional view of each of fibers 210, 220, and 230. The applicability of the termination scheme of terminated hollow-core fiber 100 is not limited to the fiber types shown in FIG. 2. For example, this termination scheme may be applied to a NANF fiber as well.

Revolver fiber 210 includes a solid outer wall 212 and a plurality of tubes 214 arranged on the interior surface of outer wall 212. Tubes 214 form an antiresonant structured cladding that surrounds a hollow core 218. Outer wall 212 may have a different shape than depicted in FIG. 2. However, most commonly, outer wall 212 has an approximately circular cross section, such that outer wall 212 has an approximately uniform thickness 212T.

Photonic crystal fiber 220 has a microstructured cladding 224 with a large number of hexagonal channels arranged in a honeycomb pattern. Microstructured cladding 224 surrounds a hollow core 228. The material forming microstructured cladding 224 also forms a continuous outer wall 222 that surrounds microstructured cladding 224. The exterior surface of outer wall 222 usually has a circular cross section, and outer wall 222 may be characterized by a minimum thickness 222T with some segments of outer wall 222 being somewhat thicker than minimum thickness 222T due to the honeycomb pattern of microstructured cladding 224.

Kagome fiber 230 includes a cladding 234 consisting of thin walls arranged in a trihexagonal tiling pattern known from Japanese Kagome baskets. Cladding 234 is supported by a solid outer wall 232 and surrounds a hollow core 238. The interior and exterior surfaces of outer wall 232 usually have approximately circular cross sections, such that outer wall 232 has an approximately uniform thickness 232T.

Each of revolver fiber 210, photonic crystal fiber 220, and Kagome fiber 230 has a hollow core surrounded by a structured cladding, and the structured cladding is surrounded and supported by a solid outer wall. Many other types of hollow-core fibers have this same basic design, including hexagonal hollow-core fibers, anti-resonant fibers with parachute-shaped cells, nested-antiresonant-nodeless

fibers, and conjoined-tube anti-resonant fibers. Furthermore, many of these types of fibers come in different versions. For example, a revolver fiber may be configured with adjacent tubes **214** touching each other, as shown in FIG. 2, or with space between each pair of adjacent tubes. Additionally, the thickness of the outer wall may vary significantly between different versions of each of the hollow-core fiber types mentioned above.

Referring again to FIG. 1, hollow-core fiber **110** includes a structured cladding that surrounds a hollow core. Hollow-core fiber **110** also includes a solid outer wall that surrounds the structured cladding. The termination scheme of terminated hollow-core fiber **100** is compatible with hollow-core fibers where the solid outer wall is essentially the outermost wall(s) of the structured cladding rather than a wall that is substantially thicker than the walls forming the structured cladding. However, the insertion of hollow-core fiber **110** into capillary **120** may be easier if the solid outer wall of hollow-core fiber **110** is structurally strong.

Capillary **120** forms a thermal bridge between hollow-core fiber **110** and the interface between capillary **120** and endcap **130**. However, distance **140L** and the dimensions of capillary **120** may be chosen such that the thermal impedance of capillary **120** is sufficient to keep the temperature of the structured cladding of hollow-core fiber **110** at a safe level during fusing of endcap **130** with end face **122** of capillary **120**. The thickness of the solid outer wall of hollow-core fiber **110**, e.g., thickness **212T**, **222T**, or **232T**, may also provide thermal isolation. However, by virtue of the thermal impedance of capillary **120**, the solid outer wall of hollow-core fiber **110** is not relied upon for thermal isolation. In some embodiments of terminated hollow-core fiber **100**, the minimum thickness of the solid outer wall of hollow-core fiber **110** is less than 30 μm , for example in the range between 10 and 30 μm or between 10 and 20 μm .

Fusing of end face **122** to endcap **130** partly seals off fiber end **112** from the environment. In one embodiment, endcap **130** is fused to end face **122** along a closed path that completely surrounds the interior hollow of capillary **120**, so as to seal this interface.

To secure hollow-core fiber **110** in capillary **120**, hollow-core fiber **110** is adhered to capillary **120** at the end face **124** of capillary **120** where hollow-core fiber **110** extends out of capillary in the direction away from endcap **130**. This adhesive bond may also serve to seal off fiber end **112** from the environment. In conjunction with a sealing bond between endcap **130** and end face **122** of capillary **120**, endcap **130** and capillary **120** thereby protect fiber end **112** from contaminants and moisture that otherwise may damage hollow-core fiber **110** or degrade its performance.

In an alternative approach, capillary **120** is laser welded to hollow-core fiber **110** at end face **124** of capillary **120**. This alternative approach advantageously eliminates the need for an adhesive at end face **124** and therefore also eliminates any associated risk of outgassing from such an adhesive causing contamination of surface **132** or the end of hollow-core fiber **110** facing surface **132**. On the other hand, as discussed above, laser welding of capillary **120** to hollow-core fiber **110** may not be possible without compromising the structured cladding of hollow-core fiber **110**.

The diameter **130D** of endcap **130** exceeds the diameter **112D** of fiber end **112**, such that light entering or exiting hollow-core fiber **110** via fiber end **112** has a lower fluence in endcap **130** than in hollow-core fiber **110**. Diameter **130D** may be one or several millimeters (mm). The beam diameter at the distal surface **134** of endcap **130**, facing away from fiber end **112**, is therefore greater than at the termination of

fiber end **112**. Thus, even if contaminants are present on distal surface **134**, these contaminants are less likely to present an issue. In certain embodiments, surface **134** has an antireflective (AR) coating to eliminate or reduce Fresnel losses at this surface.

FIG. 3 shows terminated hollow-core fiber **100** in further detail and also illustrates light propagation therethrough. Light (e.g., laser light) propagating in hollow-core fiber **110** in the direction toward fiber end **112** exits fiber end **112** inside capillary **120** and forms a light beam **390** (e.g., a laser beam). Over distance **140L** from fiber end **112** to the proximal surface **132** of endcap **130**, beam **390** expands radially due to diffraction. Inside endcap **130**, beam **390** continues to expand radially until reaching a maximum diameter **390D** at distal surface **134** of endcap **130**.

Preferably, distance **140L** and the inner diameter **340D** of capillary **120** along distance **140L** are chosen such that beam **390**, expanding in the direction from hollow-core fiber **110** to endcap **130**, is not incident on capillary **120**. For example, distance **140L** and inner diameter **340D** may be such that the $1/e^2$ diameter of beam **390** is smaller than inner diameter **340D**. The appropriate choices for distance **140L** and inner diameter **340D** depend on the properties of hollow-core fiber **110**, specifically, the mode-field diameter therein.

In one embodiment, hollow-core fiber **110** is a single-mode fiber characterized by a mode-field diameter MFD and configured to guide light with a wavelength λ . In this embodiment, non-zero distance **140** may obey the relationship

$$L < \frac{\pi}{\lambda} \left(\frac{\text{MFD}}{2} \right)^2 \sqrt{\frac{D}{\text{MFD}}},$$

wherein L represents distance **140L** and D represents inner diameter **340D** of capillary **120**. When distance **140L** obeys this relationship, the $1/e^2$ diameter of beam **390** remains smaller than inner diameter **340D** of capillary **120** along the entire distance **140L** between fiber end **112** and endcap **130**. In another embodiment, hollow-core fiber **110** is a multi-mode fiber characterized by a numerical aperture NA. To prevent beam **390** from reaching the walls of capillary **120**, non-zero distance **140** may be less than $D/(2\text{NA})$ in this embodiment.

When coupling light into fiber end **112** of hollow-core fiber **110**, beam **390** is converging when incident on endcap **130** at distal surface **134**. For optimal coupling into hollow-core fiber **110**, the transverse intensity distribution of a beam **390** propagating in the direction from distal surface **134** to fiber end **112** is similar or identical to the transverse intensity distribution of a beam **390** propagating in the direction from fiber end **112** to distal surface **134**.

Capillary **120** may be cylindrical with an inner cylindrical surface and an outer cylindrical surface. The wall thickness **320T** of capillary **120** may cooperate with distance **140L** to prevent overheating end **112** of hollow-core fiber **110** when capillary **120** and endcap **130** are fused together.

The need for thermal isolation between hollow-core fiber **110** and end face **122** of capillary **120** puts a lower limit on distance **140L**. On the other hand, an upper limit on distance **140L** may be imposed by a requirement to prevent beam **390** from illuminating capillary **120**. In one design approach, the selection of parameters, such as distance **140L**, inner diameter **340D**, and wall thickness **320T**, is driven by the properties of hollow-core fiber **110**. To achieve a good fit between hollow-core fiber **110** and capillary **120**, it is

preferred that inner diameter **340D** of capillary **120** just slightly exceeds the outer diameter **112D** of end **112** of hollow-core fiber **110**, for example by a few micrometers or a few tens of micrometers. Therefore, in this approach, diameter **112D** determines inner diameter **340D** of capillary **120**. The mode properties of hollow-core fiber **110**, e.g., its mode-field diameter or numerical aperture, determine the divergence of a beam **390** emerging from fiber end **112**. This divergence and inner diameter **340D** together define an upper limit for distance **140L**. In one example, outer diameter **112D** is in the range between 60 and 240 μm , inner diameter **340D** is in the range between 65 and 275 μm , distance **140L** is at least 50 μm , for example between 50 and 200 μm , and wall thickness **320T** is at least 50 μm , for example between 50 and 100 μm .

As mentioned above in reference to FIG. 1, hollow-core fiber **110** is adhered to capillary **120** at the end of capillary **120** where hollow-core fiber **110** extends out of capillary **120**. This is illustrated in FIG. 3 where a bead of adhesive **360** secures hollow-core fiber **110** to end face **124** of capillary **120**. Adhesive **360** may extend all the way around the circumference of hollow-core fiber **110** to ensure a complete seal. Adhesive **360** may be located almost exclusively outside capillary **120**, as shown in FIG. 3. Alternatively, some or all of adhesive **360** may be allowed to penetrate into capillary **120** along the interface between hollow-core fiber **110** and the interior wall of capillary **120**. To prevent or at least reduce contamination of fiber end **112** and surface **132** of endcap **130** caused by outgassing of adhesive **360**, the length **120L** of capillary **120** may be at least 10 mm, for example in the range between 10 and 150 mm.

Outside capillary **120**, hollow-core fiber **110** may have a jacket **150** disposed on the outer wall of hollow-core fiber **110** (e.g., outer wall **212**, **222**, or **232**, or another similar outer wall). Jacket **150** may be made of a polymer with a lower refractive index than the outer wall of hollow-core fiber **110** to minimize outcoupling of light that has leaked into the outer wall or a higher refractive index to prevent leaked light from being guided within the outer wall. However, polymers are known to outgas and thereby contaminate optical surfaces. In embodiments where hollow-core fiber **110** includes jacket **150**, jacket **150** is absent from the portion of hollow-core fiber **110** positioned inside capillary **120**. For example, jacket **150** may have been stripped off this portion of hollow-core fiber **110** before insertion into capillary **120** to avoid potentially contaminating surface **132** and fiber end **112**. Additionally, if jacket **150** was present on the portion of hollow-core fiber **110** located inside capillary **120**, the pliability of a typical jacket material might compromise the accuracy and stability of the position of hollow-core fiber **110** relative to capillary **120**.

FIG. 4 is a flowchart for one method **400** for terminating a hollow-core fiber with an endcap, with no need for fusing the hollow-core fiber to another part. Method **400** may be used to terminate hollow-core fiber **110** so as to produce terminated hollow-core fiber **100**. Method **400** may be performed with robotic equipment and/or using manual operations. In the following, method **400** is discussed in the context of hollow-core fiber **110** and terminated hollow-core fiber **100**.

Method **400** includes steps **410**, **420**, and **430**. Step **410** positions end **112** of hollow-core fiber **110** in capillary **120** such that fiber end **112** terminates inside capillary **120** at a distance **140L** away from end face **122** of capillary **120**. This arrangement is depicted in FIG. 1. Step **420** adheres hollow-core fiber **110** to capillary **120** at end face **124** of capillary

120, as discussed above in reference to FIG. 3 and adhesive **360**. Step **430** laser welds endcap **130** to end face **122** of capillary **120**, resulting in the configuration depicted in FIG. 1.

Steps **410**, **420**, and **430** may be performed in the order listed in FIG. 4. Alternatively, the order of steps **420** and **430** may be reversed, although it may be more practical to perform the laser welding in step **430** after having performed step **420** to secure hollow-core fiber **110** in capillary **120** in the desired position. It is also possible to perform step **430** before steps **410** and **420**. However, performing step **410** prior to step **430** is required to utilize a particularly practical embodiment of step **410** discussed below in reference to FIGS. 5A-5D.

FIGS. 5A-D depict one embodiment of step **410** of method **400** to position hollow-core fiber **110** in capillary **120**. This embodiment of step **410** includes steps **412**, **414**, and **416** indicated in the flowchart of FIG. 4 and performed in the order listed.

Step **412** inserts end **112** of hollow-core fiber **110** into capillary **120** from the end of capillary **120** having end face **124**, as shown in FIG. 5A and indicated therein by arrow **580**. Step **412** may position hollow-core fiber **110** such that fiber end **112** terminates inside capillary **120**, outside capillary **120** or exactly at the end of capillary **120**. It is not necessary to perform step **410** with great accuracy. FIG. 5B shows one example configuration after completion of step **412**, wherein hollow-core fiber **110** extends all the way through capillary **120**.

Step **414** cleaves hollow-core fiber **110** and capillary **120** together, as indicated by cleaving line **560** in FIG. 5B. Step **414** results in (a) the formation of end face **122** of capillary **120** and (b) fiber end **112** terminating at end face **122**, as shown in FIG. 5C.

FIG. 5D illustrates step **416**. Step **416** pulls hollow-core fiber **110** back from end face **122**, as indicated by arrow **582**, such that fiber end **112** terminates inside capillary **120** distance **140L** away from end face **122**.

When hollow-core fiber **110** is equipped with jacket **150**, step **410** of method **400** is preceded by a step of stripping jacket **150** off the portion of hollow-core fiber **110** that is inside capillary **120** during or after the performance of step **410**.

As an alternative to method **400**, hollow-core fiber **110** may be cleaved separately from capillary **120**. For example, capillary **120** may be cleaved prior to insertion of hollow-core fiber **110** therein. In this case, the process step depicted in FIG. 5B cleaves a portion of fiber end **112** protruding from capillary **120**.

FIG. 6 is a full section view of one housing **600** for terminated hollow-core fiber **100**. FIG. 7 is a full section view of one connectorized hollow-core fiber **700** that is terminated hollow-core fiber **100** implemented in housing **600**. In each of FIGS. 6 and 7, the full section view is taken along a mid-plane extending along a longitudinal axis of housing **600** that, in connectorized hollow-core fiber **700**, contains the optical axis of hollow-core fiber **110**. Housing **600** may be rotationally symmetric about the optical axis of hollow-core fiber **110**.

Housing **600** includes a ferrule **610** and an insert **620**. Ferrule **610** has two hollow compartments **612** and **614** separated from each other by a divider **616**. A narrower channel **618** passes through divider **616** between compartments **612** and **614**. Insert **620** is seated in compartment **612** farthest from divider **616**. Insert **620** has (a) a hollow compartment **622** facing away from divider **616**, (b) a wall **626** between compartment **622** and the portion of compart-

ment 612 not occupied by insert 620, and (c) a narrower channel 628 passing through wall 626 between compartments 622 and 612.

When terminated hollow-core fiber 100 is implemented in housing 600, as shown in FIG. 7, endcap 130 is seated in compartment 614, capillary 120 extends through channel 618 from endcap 130 into compartment 612, and hollow-core fiber 110 extends from inside capillary 120 through channel 628 and compartment 622 of insert 620. Proximal surface 132 of endcap 130 may be seated on divider 616, as shown in FIG. 7, or endcap 130 may be seated in compartment 614 a non-zero distance away from divider 616. The portion of hollow-core fiber 110 extending through insert 620 may be equipped with jacket 150. Capillary 120 may fit snugly in channel 618, and hollow-core fiber 110 (optionally jacket 150 thereof) may fit snugly in channel 628 of insert 620.

To secure terminated hollow-core fiber 100 in housing 600, an adhesive may be applied to an interface between endcap 130 and ferrule 610. Similarly, an adhesive may be applied to an interface between hollow-core fiber 110 and insert 620. Alternatively, when the portion of hollow-core fiber 110 passing through channel 628 of insert 620 includes jacket 150, hollow-core fiber 110 may be press-fit in channel 628. In either case, housing 600 holds endcap 130 and a section of hollow-core fiber 110 that is outside capillary 120, while capillary 120 is contained by housing 600.

Ferrule 610 and insert 620 may be made of metal. In one example, ferrule 610 is made of copper and insert 620 is made of brass. Housing 600 protects capillary 120 and the interface between capillary 120 and endcap 130. In particular, the mechanical strength of housing 600 serves to prevent capillary 120 from breaking and also serves to prevent breakage of the bond between capillary 120 and endcap 130.

In an alternative embodiment, housing 600 omits insert 620. In this alternative embodiment, wall 626, channel 628, and compartment 622 are instead integrally formed features of ferrule 610. The separate insert 620 in the embodiment of housing 600 shown in FIGS. 6 and 7 serves to simplify the manufacture of housing 600.

FIGS. 8A-D illustrate certain steps of one method 800 for assembling connectorized hollow-core fiber 700. Method 800 is an extension of method 400. First, as illustrated in FIG. 8A, hollow-core fiber 110 is inserted into housing 600 via the end 870 of housing 600 having insert 620. Hollow-core fiber 110 is passed through housing 600 in the direction indicated by arrow 880 until fiber end 112 extends beyond divider 616 by at least the length 120L of capillary 120 (and more, if hollow-core fiber 110 is cleaved separately from capillary 120 after insertion of hollow-core fiber 110 into capillary 120). Preferably, fiber end 112 extends at least length 120L beyond the end 872 of housing 600 that is farthest from insert 620. The insertion step illustrated in FIG. 8A involves passing hollow-core fiber 110 through channel 628 of insert 620 and channel 618 of ferrule 610 (see FIG. 6).

Next, as illustrated in FIG. 8B, capillary 120 is slipped onto fiber end 112 and positioned such that fiber end 112 terminates inside capillary 120, distance 140L away from end face 122 of capillary 120. The FIG. 8B step of assembling hollow-core fiber 110 and capillary 120 is an embodiment of step 410 of method 400 and may include steps 412, 414, and 416. When capillary 120 is positioned relative to fiber end 112 as shown in FIG. 8B, step 420 of method 400 is performed to adhere hollow-core fiber 110 to the end of capillary 120 closest to housing 600.

Once capillary 120 is secured to hollow-core fiber 110 in this manner, hollow-core fiber 110 is partly retracted into housing 600, as illustrated in FIG. 8C and indicated by arrow 882, such that capillary 120 is supported in divider 616.

When capillary 120 is supported in this manner, endcap 130 is fused to capillary 120 as shown in FIG. 8D. This fusing step is an embodiment of step 430 of method 400 and is performed by laser welding. After laser welding endcap 130 to capillary 120, hollow-core fiber 110 is retracted further, as indicated by arrow 884 in FIG. 8D, until endcap 130 is seated in end 872 of housing 600. In one embodiment, endcap 130 is seated on divider 616 as shown in FIG. 7. Once endcap 130 is positioned in this manner, an adhesive may be applied to secure endcap 130 and/or hollow-core fiber 110 to housing 600 as discussed above in reference to FIGS. 6 and 7.

In the example of method 800 illustrated in FIGS. 8A-D, hollow-core fiber 110 has a jacket 150, but jacket 150 is absent from the portion of hollow-core fiber 110 that is inserted into capillary 120. Method 800 may start with hollow-core fiber 110 being fully jacketed and then include a step of stripping off a portion of the jacket after inserting hollow-core fiber 110 into housing 600.

The present invention is described above in terms of a preferred embodiment and other embodiments. The invention is not limited, however, to the embodiments described and depicted herein. Rather, the invention is limited only by the claims appended hereto.

What is claimed is:

1. A terminated hollow-core optical fiber, comprising:
 - a capillary having (a) first and second end faces facing in mutually-opposite directions and (b) an inner cylindrical surface extending from the first end face to the second end face and defining a bore of the capillary;
 - a hollow-core optical fiber including a structured cladding and having a first end that terminates in the bore of the capillary a non-zero distance away from the first end face of the capillary, the hollow-core optical fiber being adhered to the capillary at the second end face of the capillary where the hollow-core optical fiber extends out of the capillary; and
 - an endcap directly abutted and fused to the first end face of the capillary, the endcap having a larger diameter than the first end of the hollow-core optical fiber.
2. The terminated hollow-core optical fiber of claim 1, wherein the capillary is a cylinder with a cylindrical outer surface.
3. The terminated hollow-core optical fiber of claim 1, wherein the first end of the hollow-core fiber is free of a jacket.
4. The terminated hollow-core optical fiber of claim 1, wherein a surface of the endcap facing away from the hollow-core optical fiber includes an antireflective coating.
5. The terminated hollow-core optical fiber of claim 1, wherein the hollow-core fiber includes:
 - a solid outer wall forming a radially outermost surface of the first end of the hollow-core fiber; and
 - a structured cladding inside the solid outer wall to guide light in a hollow core surrounded by the structured cladding.
6. The terminated hollow-core optical fiber of claim 5, wherein a minimum thickness of the solid outer wall is between 10 and 30 micrometers.
7. The terminated hollow-core optical fiber of claim 1, wherein the non-zero distance is in the range between 50 and 200 micrometers, and wherein the capillary has an inner diameter in the range between 60 and 240 micrometers.

8. The terminated hollow-core optical fiber of claim 1, wherein the second end face of the capillary is at least 10 millimeters from the endcap.

9. A connectorized hollow-core optical fiber, comprising: the terminated hollow-core optical fiber of claim 1; and a housing that (a) holds the endcap and a section of the hollow-core optical fiber external to the capillary and (b) contains the capillary.

10. The connectorized hollow-core optical fiber of claim 9, wherein the section of the hollow-core optical fiber held directly by the housing is contained in a jacket.

11. A terminated hollow-core optical fiber, comprising: a capillary; a hollow-core optical fiber including a structured cladding and having a first end that terminates inside the capillary a non-zero distance away from a first end face of the capillary, the hollow-core optical fiber being adhered to the capillary at a second end face of the capillary where the hollow-core optical fiber extends out of the capillary; and an endcap fused to the first end face of the capillary, the endcap having a larger diameter than the first end of the hollow-core optical fiber;

wherein:

the hollow-core optical fiber is a single-mode fiber characterized by a mode-field diameter MFD and configured to guide light with a wavelength λ , the capillary has an internal diameter D, and the non-zero distance is less than

$$\frac{\pi}{\lambda} \left(\frac{MFD}{2} \right)^2 \sqrt{\frac{D}{MFD}}$$

12. A terminated hollow-core optical fiber, comprising: a capillary; a hollow-core optical fiber including a structured cladding and having a first end that terminates inside the capillary a non-zero distance away from a first end face of the capillary, the hollow-core optical fiber being adhered to the capillary at a second end face of the capillary where the hollow-core optical fiber extends out of the capillary; and an endcap fused to the first end face of the capillary, the endcap having a larger diameter than the first end of the hollow-core optical fiber;

wherein:

the hollow-core optical fiber is a multi-mode fiber characterized by a numerical aperture NA, the capillary has an internal diameter D, and the non-zero distance is no greater than

$$\frac{D}{2NA}$$

* * * * *